

Canadian  
Association of the Deaf



Association  
des Sourds du Canada

March 8, 2023

Royal Canadian Mint  
320 Sussex Drive Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0G8

Dear Marie Lemay, Master of Coin, CEO and President of Royal Mint

We, the board of the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD-ASC), are in support of the letter written by Veronica Bickle, President of the Ontario Association of the Deaf (OAD) on January 23<sup>rd</sup> and to share our concerns and perspective regarding honouring Alexander Graham Bell on minted coins. As an organization advocating for human rights on behalf of Deaf Canadians, we, like OAD, feel that Alexander Graham Bell is a poor choice to honour our community.

We do recognize Bell's innovative accomplishments that unlocked the technological progress in telecommunication. His legacy, however, is and will always be stained by his eugenic ideology that was harmful to the Deaf population. He opposed sign language, schools for the Deaf, and marriages between Deaf couples.

In his memoir, Upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race, he wrote, "Those who believe as I do, that the production of a defective race of human beings would be a great calamity to the world..." and "it is to be feared that comparatively few of the congenitally deaf are able to read books understandingly unless couched in simple language."

We feel there are better options to counter the effect of his audist ideology on the Deaf community. We know of many Deaf Canadians who were more inclusive and embraced the Canadian values of multiculturalism, equity, tolerance, and civil liberties. One suggestion is Robert E. McBrien, who was the first president and founder of our organization in 1940, and who served our community for 27 years.

As well, we have other famous names of people who were deaf that could be considered, including the grandmother of King Charles III, Princes Alice or even Alexander Graham Bell's own wife, Mabel Bell, who lost her hearing at age five.

We are not seeking to cancel your efforts to recognize a great Canadian invention, but we encourage you to commit to the spirit of the Royal Mint's Accessibility Action Plan, which calls for including Deaf and hard-of-hearing people in dialogue. Your plan clearly states,

“By working together with sustained commitment, we will build a positive image of disability, engage persons with disabilities in decision-making, and increase accessibility of the built environment and deliver customer and employee experiences that are dignified, fair and respectful.”

To help move forward, we would invite you to begin a dialogue with the Deaf community to improve the consultation process and ensure the future designs are inclusive for all Canadians, and include Deaf people that match your criteria and recognize the contributions of Deaf people to Canada.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Richard Belzile  
Executive Director



Shawna Joynt  
President of the Board

CC:

The Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion  
The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance  
The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage  
Stephanie Cadieux, Chief Accessibility Officer  
Doug Ettinger, President and CEO of Canada Post  
Veronica Bickle, President of Ontario Association of the Deaf

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